

Cakras



“Cakra” (also spelled chakra) means “wheel,” “discus,” or “turning.” The cakras are non-physical energy-centers in the subtle body which act as gateways into higher states of consciousness.

The Vedas say:

aṣṭācākrā navadvārā | devānām
pūrayodhyā |
tasyāgm̐ hiraṇmayāḥ kośaḥ | svargo loko
jyotiṣā"vṛtaḥ |

The Yogi enters the Divine City within by knowing the body of eight wheels (cakras) and nine doors (orifices). He follows the different sheaths of body each encasing the next to their source, the golden body of Light, which dwells in Heaven, and which is hidden within the body but pervades the entire universe.

- Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 1 – 27 – 2 & 3

The Seven Cakras Above the Sahasrāra –

There are seven cakras located within and above the sahasrāra cakra at the top of the head. They extend into space above the head and their functions are dormant for most. These cakras are experienced by a very rare few. They are stimulated by a repeated state of samādhi by which the consciousness of the higher cakras gradually effects the mind and astral body causing a transformation of one’s entire being.

The Seven Cakras Above Sahasrāra are Called:

- 7) Vyāpinī
- 6) Vyomaṅgā
- 5) Ananta
- 4) Anātha
- 3) Anāśrita
- 2) Samanā
- 1) Unmāna

The Seven Cakras

There are seven main cakras located along the spine and inside the head, along the pathway of the *suṣumṇa nāḍī*. The highest purpose of these cakras is spiritual realization and the accompanying *siddhis* (mystical powers) which remain dormant in most people. For a few rare souls, the inner activation of the cakras is achieved after years of disciplined spiritual practice which withdraws the natural patterns of the senses and mind from the external to the internal and activates the *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* to rise through the *suṣumṇa nāḍī* and through the various cakras. It is *Kuṇḍalinī* which activates the inner function of the cakras as consciousness expands.

Outer Cakras

These cakras each have also an external aspect which relates to certain parts of the mind and physical anatomy. Most cakra healing-work and yoga practices effect only the outer, physical aspects of the cakras which relate to the mind and physical body. On an external (physical) level it is possible to have healthy functioning of all the cakras without stimulating the *kuṇḍalinī* to rise through the cakras and without inner awakening or expansion of being. Healing work with the outer cakras is becoming quite prevalent and should not be confused with the higher spiritual awakening of the inner cakras which is only achieved with great discipline, self-control, and consistent effort for many years.

Inner Awakening and Kuṇḍalinī

It requires consistent discipline and un-rewarded effort for many years to stimulate the upward movement of the *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*. She (*Kuṇḍalinī*) is the great Goddess of spiritual ascent and She is the serpent power laying dormant at the base of the spine. She is the awakening of the Higher Self and the death of the personal ego. Consciousness can not rise through the cakras quickly or by force. Expansion of consciousness must happen slowly over a period of many years for results to be safe and sustainable. The great power of the *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* cannot be controlled by the will of the ego, but She awakens of her own accord in those who humble themselves to Her will for them. A great yogi may even be able to control the movement of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, but he cannot take control of the *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* who moves according to Her own will. Forceful practices to elevate *Kuṇḍalinī* should be avoided without exception. These practices lead to dis-ease, depression, insanity, paralysis, loss of control of the body, the mind, and the senses, and even death. Though a person may temporarily force *Kuṇḍalinī* to move, if the pathway of the *suṣumṇa* is not clear, then the *Kuṇḍalinī* will rise into other, inappropriate *nāḍīs* (channels) with crippling effects. Even if *Kuṇḍalinī* is forced into the central *suṣumṇa nāḍī* it is likely that consciousness will be elevated only temporarily before it then plunges into the lower cakras below the base of the spine. Instead of using practices to stimulate or elevate the *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*, She should be supplicated humbly as a caring Mother beholding the grace to uplift consciousness into higher states. She alone chooses when a person is ready to sustain Her great power. The expansion of consciousness as *Kuṇḍalinī* rises through each of the seven cakras brings great *siddhis* and great responsibility, and the changes which Her grace brings forth for Her devotees permanently alter their consciousness and their lives. Her power should be approached timidly and with the utmost respect.

The Necessity of a Guru

The Kuṇḍalinī Śakti bestows the purest grace of transformation and liberation upon the pure souls who humbly seek Truth and Realization, but Her intense power burns and destroys all that is impure. Her power is too intense for those who have not been spiritually attuned through years of appropriate practice. It is difficult for a person to understand Her mystical movements, and easy to be misled from the path. It is wise for all who are seeking Kuṇḍalinī, to seek the guidance of a realized Guru. The grace of a Guru is necessary for the stimulation of the Kuṇḍalinī. His awakened consciousness acts as a springboard to spring the devotee from normal (ego) consciousness. Under the watchful eye of the Guru, the student progresses through the spiritual disciplines assigned by the Guru and through the realms of the various cakras. The Guru's awakened Kuṇḍalinī balances the Kuṇḍalinī in the student and directs it into the proper channels. Only with the direct grace of a living Guru may the practice of Kuṇḍalinī yoga be begun or safely sustained for spiritual expansion.

Cakra Meditations

There have been many meditation images revealed by the Sages for the purpose of inspiring consciousness to the realm of the various cakras. Some of these meditations include a number of lotus petals with corresponding seed syllables for each cakra in addition to various shapes, colors, and Deities. These images and sounds vary according to tradition because inner subtle realities do not always translate directly into outer images or sounds. According to the perceptions of the Sages of each particular tradition these meditations are taught and practiced. No one view is right or wrong, but simply a unique vision of the same truth from a different vantage point. Some cakra meditations use the seed syllables for the various cakras for purifying, energizing, and stimulating awakening for the cakras. These techniques have been revealed for the purpose of stimulating Kuṇḍalinī, and should be used only under the direct guidance of a living Guru. These meditations are often proscribed by various new-age healers for the purpose of balancing the outer (physical) aspects of the cakras. This is not the purpose for which these meditations were revealed. Using these meditations for outer healing without the preparatory steps of Yama and Niyama may stimulate incomplete and erratic movements of the Kuṇḍalinī. It is not wise to rouse the Kuṇḍalinī into motion for a person who is unprepared. Her power is difficult to endure and can even kill if a person is not ready to endure Her scorching fire of transformation. Generally it is best to allow the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti to flow as She will, and to allow awakening to happen in its own time. This is usually only possible after the physical body has healed from a condition of dis-ease. Dis-ease is a condition of consciousness (a state of mind) which generally obstructs the flow of Kuṇḍalinī. To try to cause spiritual awakening when there is a disease-consciousness effecting the mind will force Kuṇḍalinī into the wrong channels. Because these meditations have been given for spiritual awakening, it is best to use them for spiritual awakening and to use other gentler methods for working on the physical aspect of the cakras like herbs, scents, gems, colors, or touch. Even these gentle (physical) techniques should be used with care and with proper knowledge of anatomy, marmas, and the tridoṣa.

The Seven Cakras

Cakra Name	Location	Meaning	Function
7) Sahasrāra	Crown of Head	Thousand-Petaled (Lotus), Thousand Spoked (Wheel)	Illumination, Godliness
6) Ājñā	Point between the eyebrows (but inside the head)	Command, Authority, Unlimited Power	Divine Sight
5) Viśuddha	Point of spine corresponding to the throat	Very Pure, Empty, Bright White, Virtuous, Free from Vice	Divine Love
4) Anāhata	Point of the spine corresponding to the heart	Unstruct, Unwounded, Unsullied, Intact, Not-multiple	Direct Cognition
3) Maṇipūra	Point of the spine corresponding to the navel	City of Gems	Will
2) Svādhiṣṭhāna	Point of the spine just above the genitals	Dwelling Place of the Self, One's Own Place	Reason
1) Mūlādhāra	Base of the spine	Foundation, Root of Support	Memory-time-space – Governs instincts of survival and sexuality

Other minor cakras:

In addition to the seven main cakras listed in yoga literature, there are many other minor cakras. These cakras are believed by some to be connected to one or the other of the seven major cakras.

A Few Minor Cakras

Cakra	Location	Meaning	Function
hṛt or sūrya	Just below the maṇipūra (the heart center)	“seizing” or “Sun”	Here a Yogi becomes able to determine his destiny. This cakra is said to provide heat by absorbing Solar energy.
tālumūla or lalana	Inside the head just above the uvula (palate)	“indulging”	This cakra stores amrita (immortal nectar) trickling from soma cakra
manas	Just above the ājñā cakra	“mind”	Gives mastery over the senses so consciousness may enter the higher cakras
Soma or bindu	Just above the ājñā cakra	“Moon,” “immortal nectar,” or “point”	Unlocks the power to heal all dis-eases (of oneself or others) and bestows immortal life
Brahmarandhra or nirvāṇa	At the top back of the head (slightly above the head)	“the crevice of God” or “final liberation”	Grants liberation or samādhi
śrī or guru	Slightly above the top of the head	“resplendent” or “spiritual teacher”	It is associated with the inner Guru (the guiding force within); and when consciousness dwells there it endows the yogi with the qualities of a Guru (or teacher of Truth)

The Three Granthis

Though it is the nature of the ego to work against spiritual awakening in general, there are said to be three locations along the suṣumṇa nāḍī where the upward movement of Kuṇḍalinī may be particularly difficult. These three obstructions are called granthis, meaning “knots” or “difficulties.” Due to the nature of consciousness and the instinctive mind, it is particularly difficult for consciousness to rise beyond these three points. These three granthis are the Brahma granthi, Viṣṇu granthi, and Rudra granthi. There are many other minor points where the Kuṇḍalinī may get tied up for the meditating yogi, and the path of spiritual ascent will be slightly different for each individual, but these three points generally are points of difficulty for all. The Sahasrāra cakra at the top of the head is sometimes described as the cakra of 1,000 granthis, because there are many points of difficulty within the cakra to be inwardly faced by the yogi before final liberation is attained. Also the throat Cakra contains a minor granthi as well.

Brahma Granthi

The Brahma Granthi is located at the 3rd (Maṇipūra) cakra, though other sources say it is at the 1st (Mūlādhāra) cakra. These are generally both points of some difficulty. The 3rd cakra is a point of great significance for the yogi because it signifies detachment from the phenomenal world. When Kuṇḍalinī pierces this Granthi the yogi is not bound by phenomenal existence. He attains the will to work through the karmas of life and to transform his destiny. Before consciousness rises beyond this point there may be great darkness and difficulty as consciousness works through the realms of the first 3 cakras. It is very difficult for a person whose consciousness is rising through the first 3 cakras to discern whether progress is being made or not. It is very important for a seeker to have the guidance of a qualified Guru especially at this time. When the consciousness surpasses the Brahma granthi at the 3rd cakra things become much easier and the yogi begins to recognize his progress and begins to transcend the darkness of the lower cakras because he has conquered the instinctive mind and transcended the physical body. This seeker is a master of the world of forms and names. The 1st cakra marks the point of spiritual ascent which comes about when spiritual seeking is consciously begun when the Kuṇḍalinī gets aroused from its latent position at the base of the spine.

Viṣṇu Granthi

The Viṣṇu Granthi is located at the 4th (Anāhata) cakra. It marks a point in the ascent of Kuṇḍalinī when emotional ties to traditions are cut. Compassion leads the consciousness into attachment to the external world. When the Viṣṇu Granthi is pierced this compassion gets transformed into a higher vision of universal good which empowers the actions of the Yogi to change the karmas of others. He sees all things to be manifestations of the Lord's grace and Loves and serves naturally by his nature. The yogi who surpasses this granthi becomes a knower of truth and the words which he speaks come to be. His words are living scriptures to awaken all that listen. At this point in his practice, the yogi enjoys life and happily accepts the karmas which arise for him. He sees Divine Light and seeks the Lord with all his heart, this is natural because he has transcended Prāṇa and its (astral) body. This yogi is a master of will and desire and has no attachment to the fruits of karma.

Rudra Granthi

The Rudra Granthi is located at the 6th (Ājñā) Cakra. It marks the point of no return beyond which they say spiritual progress generally does not backslide, but continues onward toward merging with the Divine. Just as the Brahma Granthi relates to the physical body and the Viṣṇu Granthi relates to the astral body, the Rudra Granthi relates to the Causal (Soul) body and the detachment thereof. The obstacle here is the attachment to the separate identity the ego-consciousness. When the yogi detached from the sense of “I,” the Kuṇḍalini pierces the Rudra Granthi en route toward the Sahasrāra cakra at the top of the head and the realization of the immortal Self. The true Self abides in all things, it is not in one place or time, but in all places past, present, and future. When the yogi’s consciousness rises beyond the Rudra Granthi, he sees himself to be infinite and beyond time. He knows the past, present, and future, may disappear and reappear at will, and may transport himself to any place or time or to many places simultaneously. He must be careful at this point because many siddhi are developed not to be lured by the temptations of these powers back into the material realm and the lower cakras. The spiritual master, ever-weary of the pitfalls of the siddhis, rededicates all his efforts toward the highest realization and merges completely into the infinite Self. His awareness transcends all things and pervades all things.

The Three Granthis

Granthi	Location	Relevance
Brahma Granthi	At the 3 rd (Maṇipūra) Cakra	Physical Body; Bondage to Desire; the Mind / Feeling / Will
Viṣṇu Granthi	At the 4 th (Anāhata) Cakra	Astral Body; Bondage of Actions; Prāṇa / Action
Rudra Granthi	At the 6 th (Ājñā) Cakra	Causal Body; Bondage of Thoughts; Knowing / Jñāna

The Seven Chakras Below the mūlādhāra:

Many people's consciousness in this age of kali yuga dwells mainly in one or the other of these lower realms of consciousness. When karmas arise without being faced consciously and resolved awareness is drawn successively and involuntarily into each of these lower realms. It is said to be necessary to shut off the doorway to the lower chakras for the kuṇḍalini to ascend and truly awaken and dwell in the higher chakras. It is not that the awakened yogi does not ever feel the emotions of the lower chakras, but that he does not dwell in them but remains consciously detached. The yogi does not become stuck in these lower states and does not act from them, but remains detached like a person watching a sad television show. The doorway to the lower chakras may be effectively sealed off by the grace of an awakened Guru, through the practice of Yama, and Niyama, Karma Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga.

Seven Chakras Below the mūlādhāra

Chakra Name	Location	Meaning	Attributes
1) Atala	Hips	Without Bottom	Fear and Lust - indecision, stymies motivation
2) Vitala	Thighs	Region of the Lost	Raging anger
3) Sutala	Knees	Great lower Region	Retaliatory jealousy – when the consciousness enters this realm people harbor grudges and act out of rage to injure others
4) Talātala	Calves	Under the Bottom Level	Prolonged confusion – negative karmas compound and obstruct the flow of awareness
5) Rasātala	Ankles	Lower Region of Moisture	Selfishness – A veil of selfishness and self-centeredness obstructs the instinct to care for others
6) Mahātala	Feet	Greatest Lower Region	Absence of Conscience – In this realm there is blindness to the higher impulses and even guilt and fear are foreign – for this realm, life is criminal
7) Pātala	Soles of Feet	Lower Region of Wickedness	Malice and Murder – state of hell; hating, hurting, and even killing for its own sake without remorse. Reason rarely reaches this realm